THE GREAT THOUSAND YEARS

RALPH ADAMS CRAM

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WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1908, AND FIRST PRINTED IN PAX, THE MAGAZINE OF THE BENEDICTINES OF CALDEY, IN DECEMBER, 1910. TO WHICH IS ADDED A BRIEF COMMENTARY WRITTEN IN JANUARY, 1918, AND CALLED

TEN YEARS AFTER

By

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SOONER or later will come an historian of novel temper, one who will content himself neither with some narrow span of years covered by the life of a man or the duration of a dynasty, nor yet with the hardly more comprehensive annals of a nation or of a race. To him, standing in brightness, all times will unroll themselves in majestical sequence between darkness and darkness: coming from the shadow of the unrecorded, vanishing in the shadow of the unforeseen. Then will appear the unity of history, the Titanic pulsation that throbs through all time; and eras and epochs will take their proper place simply as sequent minutes assembling into the hours that make up the long day between the night that precedes and the night that follows after.

The fashion of history that concerned itself with the rise and fall of dynasties, the doings and death of kings, was quite the foolishest method man ever vainly im-

agined. These things are but the froth of bursting bubbles on the waves of change, and it is only by looking beneath that the slow pulsation reveals itself; a deep throbbing in five-hundred-year epochs, a tide that rises and falls in obedience to some primal and unknowable law, signalized in its tremendous beatings by the lives of men who are the instruments of the Will of God, and such efficient instruments that now and again one almost feels that they themselves are the effective energy.

This great throbbing is as rhythmical as are human heart-beats, only the pulsations are each five centuries long, the beat falling at these regular intervals both before and after the year of the Incarnation, which forms of course the moment from which we calculate our system of historical periodicity. Before, though racial identity lasted sometimes for two thousand years, these great periods were always divided into epochs of perfect distinctness, each approximately of five centuries' duration, and whether we consider Egypt, Judæa, Babylonia, or Assyria, we find that the years 1500, 1000 and 500 B.C. mark approximately the end of a consistent era of five hundred

years, the beginning of another destined to equal duration. Hellenism lasted through two quite distinct phases, almost to the Birth of Christ. Rome for an equal period until five centuries after. Then came five hundred years while the Eastern Empire was going through its first and greatest epoch (later to be followed by an equal space of time marked by a desperate and hopeless struggle for existence), while the races of the North were in France and Germany and England laying deep the foundations of their great future, and while the South was hidden in the gloom of the Dark Ages; a shrouding cloud of horror and despair that only opened now and then to show — working dimly — the beginnings of the great epoch of Mediaevalism that began with the year 1000, and ended five centuries later with the dawn of our own epoch, that may be neither estimated nor named until its term, which is due to fall before the close of the present century.

This is all in general terms, of course; there sometimes comes nearly a century of premature decay, and sometimes vitality endures beyond its allotted space by almost an equal period, but no epoch has either

begun or ended except in the century preceding or following the established node, and one might almost say that history records no crucial point in civilization within the three centuries that fall in the midst of an epoch. Of course there is often a long period of incubation; the beginnings of a new era reach back century after century until the point of departure is found coincident with the effective opening of the antecedent epoch, as the origins of Rome are working darkly in the years of Marathon and of Salamis and Thermopylae that signalized the flaming dawn of Hellenism; as the Son of God becomes Incarnate just as Roman imperialism rises dominant over the world, even though five centuries were to pass before His reign was to be established in the East; as S. Benedict and Pope S. Gregory the Great appear five centuries before the final redemption of the West, and Charlemagne three centuries later strives to break the thraldom of the Dark Ages, a deed only to be accomplished at the coming node by Cluny and Otto the Great and Pope Gregory VII. This law of nodes means only *dominance,* and as such it marvellously holds, while around each node

assemble in the same two bounding centuries, all the names of those men who, under God, are to destroy the decadent epoch and build in majesty the new. Through the entire term of any period those who best express it are born at any time, indeed it often happens that the great flowering is after the trunk itself is dead and decaying, but the men who make epochs and mar them, whether they are Benedicts, Ottos and Hildebrands, or Alarics, Calvins and Borgias, appear like clustered stars, beneficent or baleful, around that mysterious point that forms a node of history.

Now, two of these five-hundred-year eras may well be called "The Great Thousand Years," for so they are to us who consider ourselves component parts in a still operative Christian society. The first was the epoch of the beginnings, the second of achievement; the first opens with the node of A.D. 500, the second with that of A.D. 1000, while the latter closes with the year 1500. For four centuries we have been pleased to look on exactly this time as of no importance, since we are children of what followed; and if we believed in our mother — the Renaissance-reformation-revolution —

the less we said or thought about Mediaevalism, the better for our peace of mind, as the two were separated by the entire diameter of being.

Working silently, subterraneously — as the filaments of the mushroom creep for yards under the ground before they are content to rise above the surface — the revolt against this monstrous ignorance gathered form and substance even from the last years of the eighteenth century, but it was not until the end of the first quarter of the next that it showed itself, sometimes in art, sometimes in economics, sometimes in religion and theology. Now it is soundly established, crescent even while the post-mediaeval or Renaissance epoch is going to its death with the decadent violence of anarchy, profligacy and apostasy. It is not yet sovereign over destiny, for its day is now hardly more than at dawn, if the hitherto unbroken course of history is to meet with no violent change. Neither as yet have the great personalities that are to be the hammers of God in beating down the towering fabric of modernism, the effective agents in His building of a new era — neither as yet have they appeared, though

any moment, now that we are well into the twentieth century, we may hear their footsteps on the hills. Walter Scott and Turner and Pugin, Rossetti and Morris and Ruskin, Pusey, Keble and Cardinal Newman were bright harbingers of the prophets, but greater than they will surely follow, and at their hands the present dispensation will go down in final ruin, the new rise in wonder and majesty.

What this new era shall be, who can say? There are signs however that, in its beginnings at least, it will be a restoration, through a reversion to the antecedent type of Mediaevalism: that there it will remain, content with what has been, is unbelievable, but as at the thousand-year node Pope and king and monk reverted to the five-hundred-year node, that Hildebrand and Otto and Cluny might accomplish what Pope S. Gregory the Great and S. Benedict and Theodoric had initiated, so undoubtedly shall we, when our time is come, leap the Dark Ages of the Renaissance as they the Dark Ages of the barbarian hordes, that we may find a solid basis for a new advance. So Byzantium vaulted five centuries in its attempted return to Greek modes; so the

Renaissance cleared a thousand years at a bound to what it thought the vantage ground of Roman imperialism. There was little of Hellenism in the Eastern splendour of Justinian, while the self-conscious classicism of the Renaissance merged quickly into the unearthly farrago of Calvinism, materialism, anarchy, intellectualism and infidelity that characterize the latest epoch, now, it would seem, deliberately riding for a fall. So of the new régime that is due to reach its flower in three or four hundred years; whatever its point of departure, its goal will be widely different, but that this same base of operations will be, so far as man can make it, the base established by the era we call Mediaevalism, the course of events now indicates with singular clarity and emphasis.

And could we get a better base? I think not. As we go back century after century, impelled by the new time-spirit, our eyes washed of the rheum of the Renaissance-reformation-revolution, we seem to be entering into a kind of wonderland that, whatever its defects, and they are many, was nevertheless the best that Christianity has accomplished to date. It is The Great

Thousand Years, and beside its ideals, its impulses, its achievements, all that went before seems tentative, all that follows — shall I say it? — slightly ridiculous. Let us go back to the beginnings, to the Year of our Lord 500, and see how it reveals itself, century after century, down to the lamentable end, on or about, the coming of the year 1500.

Rome had fallen, the great Rome of the West, and Theodoric was King in Italy: the marches of Ravenna had received all that survived of the old civil power, and in the East Hellenism and Orientalism had married in the name of Rome, in a strong hope that the novel union might prove fruitful. Over every vanishing frontier poured the savage hordes of Goths and Vandals, Huns, Saxons and Burgundians: civilization disappeared in blood and flame, and, as was truthfully said, "*Roma fuit.*" The great capital of the world became a howling desert, and there, in the midst of ruin and desolation, Peter sat in the tottering Chair of the Fisherman, fighting almost single-handed for the primacy, stubbornly contending against the hydra-headed heresies that rose on every hand as numberless

as the devastating tribes of barbarians. There is something sublime in this fight of the forlorn and abandoned Papacy against heresy, from Arius to the Iconoclasts, but in the end the battle was won and the gates of hell could not prevail against the Catholic Church that rose at last the sole standard of faith and morals, law and order, above the ruins of antiquity.

Actually the battle was won between the year 496, when Clovis was baptized, and 590, the year S. Gregory the Great became Pope; four centuries and more were to pass before the full fruition was achieved, but the issue was never in doubt after the Franks became Catholics and a potential nationality; after S. Benedict promulgated his Holy Rule, and after S. Gregory beat off from the throat of the Church the devouring fangs of secular control. All the horrors of the darkest hours of the Dark Ages were to follow the "false dawn" of Charlemagne, but this was but the last desperate stand of a barbarism whose doom was already sealed. The wave rose, broke, swept the world with desolation, but close behind followed another wave on the crest of which rode the ark of the new life, bearing within it the

Holy Rule of S. Benedict — the cogent agency of regeneration. Black as had been the gloom that closed around the end of the fifth century, that which shrouded the end of the tenth was even deeper. At the end of the ninth century, Byzantium was a negligible quantity, Charlemagne forgotten, while universal war and the assaults of Mohammedanism crushed Europe down to a depth never before reached in all history. And then the tide turned: in 927 S. Odo of Cluny, by one of the most pregnant actions in history, made of Benedictinism a working power of amazing efficiency; in 962 Otto the Great restored the Western Empire, while S. Bruno, under his patronage, began the rebuilding of German civilization; in 987 Hugh Capet extinguished the last of the useless Merovings, and as the first king of the Capetian dynasty, with the aid of Gerbert, afterwards Pope Sylvester II, did the same for the Franks. By the year 1000 the Norsemen, who were to play so vast a part in the building of Christian civilization, had become fixed in Normandy, converted, and fired with the passionate zeal of Cluny. The stage was set, the actors ready, and exactly at the thousand

year node the curtain rose and the splendid drama of Mediaevalism began to unfold itself.

In a way the eleventh may be considered one of the most marvellous centuries in all history: everything happened and all at once. The Monks of Cluny, Benedictines-militant, were the driving impulse, the Normans their efficient sword. From the moment Gerbert became Pope Sylvester II, the degradation of the Papacy, that had followed the righteous flame of S. Gregory the Great, came to an end. One German Pope after another laboured for the rebuilding of the shattered and degraded citadel, and with Leo IX, and Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII), the redemption was accomplished. The civilization of the eleventh century was monastic, Norman, and feudal, and its vitality was preternatural. At every point the heathen assaults had been beaten back, the peril of the "false prophet" was at an end, and the northern tribes, whether Teutonic, Norse, Saxon, or Frank, had been Christianized and assimilated. Feudalism had saved Europe, now the Benedictines of Cluny were to redeem it. Into Britain, Italy,

Sicily, the Levant, streamed the Normans, carrying with them the Catholic Faith; with the swiftness of dreams monasteries arose over all Europe, each a centre of law and order, religion, learning and mercy. Schools were reared on monastic foundations all over the West; the merchant guilds came into being, art flowered again in Norman and Romanesque majesty, and at last the fierce fervour of Catholic piety burst into the flame of the First Crusade.

The year 1100 came, and with it a sudden change, though only in agencies, the impulse was identical. Cluny had exhausted itself, but again from Burgundy, and again Benedictine, came a new influence — that of the Cistercians, with Bernard of Clairvaux in the van. The Benedictine monks of the new mode seized the standard from the loosening hold of the Cluniacs, while Augustinians and Norbertines (canons, not monastics), came to their aid; and together, monks and canons, they advanced the banner of civilization higher and higher towards ultimate victory. Wonderful as was the eleventh century, the twelfth was more amazing still: it was the middle point

between the beginnings and the consummation; all the potentialities of the eleventh century were gathered up and focussed for the culmination of the thirteenth century. It was the age of the guilds and communes, the development of the schools and the advancement of learning; of the military orders of knighthood and of chivalry; of the trouvères and troubadours, of Chrétien de Troyes and the Arthurian legends and the *chansons de gestes;* of Noyon, Chartres, Notre Dame; Innocent III, S. Bernard, S. Anselm, S. Bruno, S. Norbert, S. Thomas Becket, Peter the Venerable, Suger, Abelard, William of Champeaux; the Emperor Lothair II, Richard Coeur de Lion, Henry II, King Philip Augustus, Fulk of Anjou, Roger of Sicily, Matilda of Tuscany, Eleanor of Guienne, Blanche of Castille. The twelfth century names seem almost to cover the whole field of religious devotion, monastic vigour, dogmatic enrichment; of chivalry and poetry and art; great kings, statesmen, popes, sainted bishops and monks, models of knighthood, poets, sculptors, architects, glass makers, shoulder each other in the throng that surges through the century. National self-consciousness,

individual confidence and self-respect, industrial emancipation and development, the growth of schools and universities, go hand in hand, and when the thirteenth century opens there seems nothing more to do. There was enough, however, as we shall see.

Pope Innocent III and King Philip Augustus had been carried over from the twelfth century, and with them came S. Francis and S. Dominic who were to be for the thirteenth century what the Cistercians had been for the twelfth, the Cluniacs for the eleventh. All over Europe the spirit of nationality, fostered during the past two centuries, was to reach its highest point. There were great kings in all the world: Henry III, Edward I, Robert Bruce, Philip Augustus, Louis IX, Frederick Barbarossa, Frederick II, Rudolph of Hapsburg, Ferdinand III, Alfonso the Wise; there were great pontiffs in Peter's chair: Innocent III, Gregory IX, Boniface VIII. In England, S. Edmund of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, and Robert Grosseteste were worthy successors of S. Hugh of Lincoln and S. Thomas Becket. Catholic philosophy came full flood in the persons

of Albertus Magnus, Duns Scotus, Roger Bacon, S. Bonaventura, Raymond Lully, Alexander Hales, and, prince of all, S. Thomas Aquinas; while Blanche of Castille, S. Clare and S. Elizabeth of Hungary carried on the traditions of the great women of the last century. The beginnings of Christian poetry, painting, sculpture and architecture, revealed in the twelfth century, became the perfect achievement of the thirteenth, the Arthurian and the Nibelungen epics take on their perfect form, the Meistersingers and Minnesingers rise to new heights, while Latin hymnology becomes almost a distinct category of the fine arts, the *Dies Irae, Stabat Mater, Hora Novissima, Vexilla Regis, Pange Lingua* standing for ever by themselves on a plane unapproachable. Finally, culmination of all, comes Dante, the full flowering of Mediaevalism. Simultaneously the allied art of music, which Catholic civilization had evolved for its own expression, reached its highest recorded point in the perfecting of plainsong, or the Gregorian mode; in Siena and Florence painting was born through Duccio, Cimabue and Giotto, while sculpture, restored in South France

a century before the Pisani, found at their hands and at those of the sculptors of Chartres, Paris, Rheims, Amiens and Wells, a fruition that placed it almost on the level of the great sculpture of Greece.

All the minor arts, such as those of the metal worker, glass stainer and illuminator rose correspondingly; while architecture, the chosen art of the time, reached, in the final Gothic of France and England, a perfection never equalled before, nor approximated since. Bourges and Amiens and Rheims, Westminster, Lincoln, York Abbey, Wells remain, and so far as we can see, must so remain for ever, the highest expression of the human intelligence working in architectural forms.

Every monastery had its free school open to any who would, and often its circulating library as well: industrial education at the hands of these same monasteries and the guilds was broader and more efficient than ever before or since, while the great universities, Bologna, Paris, Padua, Montpellier, Orléans, Valencia, Valladolid, Oxford, grew into a position of power that commanded a wider and more universal influence even than modern universities

exercise to-day. Commerce and industry became almost perfectly organized, and the workman occupied a position more dignified and more satisfactory to himself than he ever has acquired since. To Pope Innocent III we owe the institution of the public or city hospital as we know it to-day, and as a result of his labours, by the end of the century, nearly all the larger cities in Europe possessed their free hospitals for the sick and isolation hospitals for lepers and others suffering from diseases known to be contagious. Finally in the matters of civil liberty, development of constitutional government and the organization of law and justice, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries take perhaps the first place in history. The Constitutions of Clarendon, Magna Carta, Bracton's de Legibus, the codification of the common law under Edward I, the Codes of Frederick II, the Institutes of S. Louis, the Vehmic courts of Germany, the Golden Bull of Andrew II of Hungary, the codices of Canon Law of Gregory IX and Boniface VIII, are not only the landmarks of civil liberty, they are as well the foundation in great measure of all modern law.

Catholic civilization after a thousand years of preparation, had blossomed in the white flower of Mediaevalism; comparable therewith there was nothing in any history that had gone before. When in 1270 S. Louis, the perfect king in Christendom, went to his eternal reward, the climax had been reached: more man could not achieve than had already been won. But even then the canker had shown itself at the heart of the white flower. Heresy had raised its head in the south of France at the end of the twelfth century, but Innocent had beaten it down for the time. In the very first years of the fourteenth century the French crown had seized upon the Papacy, establishing over it the secular control Hildebrand had died in destroying, and the Exile at Avignon followed, with the Great Schism in its trail, with all that this meant of loss of spiritual independence, of secular dominion, and the paralysing of the power of the Church in the defence of faith and morals. Abandoned by the Papacy, Italy lapsed into anarchy and even barbarism; in Germany the Empire broke down and a vicious feudalism took its place; the Hundred Years War desolated France, and the Black

Death swept over Europe like a pestilential flood. Rebellion broke out against the governments of Europe; Wycliffe and Huss took the place of the Saints that marked the preceding two centuries; and once more the waves of invasion threatened the frontiers of Europe, this time in the shape of the Turks and Tartars. The Latin, or Crusading, Kingdom of Jerusalem had fallen and the same fate was looming over the remains of the Eastern Empire, but in Spain the tide had turned and Ferdinand III was fast crushing back the Moslem host that at one time had threatened all Europe. It was a time of critical peril, but the day was not lost, as yet: heresy, rebellion and anarchy were menacing Christian civilization, but so they had done before; a Philip Augustus and an Otto III, an Anselm and a Thomas Becket, a Leo IX, and a Hildebrand might have met the peril and saved civilization. Italy alone had definitely apostatized from its mediaeval ideals; Germany and France were but in the first stages of infection; while England was as yet wholly exempt, and Spain was vigorous with strong new life. A firm hand in the Papacy, righteous kings in France and Germany, a new

Cluny or a new Citeaux might have saved the day, but none of these things occurred: instead, a Philip the Fair comes to blight all that a S. Louis had brought into flower; the earlier Hapsburgs could not avert the nemesis of Germanic order prepared by the last Hohenstaufen; for a hundred years the Papacy was but the tool of France; while the mendicant orders, in spite of the best intentions in the world, formed but dissolving bulwarks against a tide that had broken helplessly against the mighty ramparts of Benedictinism whatever its special form or name. Inch by inch the virus engendered in Italy during the time of its abandonment by the Popes, crept through the veins of Europe; northward it advanced without stay, on that progress that was not to cease until at last, two hundred years later, it was to achieve during the tyranny of the regents of Edward VI, final supremacy over England, the last stronghold of Catholic civilization.

This was what was happening darkly underneath; on the surface was a wonderful show of culture and refinement: chivalry was flaunting its splendid pageantry across Europe, and almost every year was born

some child who later was to be the voicing of a great civilization only the dregs of which remained to him. Fra Angelico and Jan Van Eyck, Filippo Lippi, Mantegna, Perugino, Leonardo da Vinci, Albert Dürer, Botticelli, the Bellini, Titian, Giorgione, almost all the great painters of Christendom were born in the century that intervened between the beginning of the Great Schism and the election of Pope Alexander VI. With them came into the world such other fruits of Catholic civilization as Joan of Arc, Savonarola, Erasmus, Sir Thomas More, the Chevalier Bayard, S. Ignatius Loyola, S. Philip Neri, but simultaneously those whose destiny it was to bring the great epoch to an end in ignorance, anarchy and apostasy: Luther, Macchiavelli, Cranmer, Crumwell, Henry VIII, and the spawn of the house of Borgia.

It was a field of Armageddon, prepared for the warfare of good and evil; the armies were drawing together, all the hosts of Heaven waited expectant, and in the year 1453 the great battle began. Then fell Constantinople before the devouring Turks, and suddenly over Italy poured the flood of decadent philosophy, evil morals and

false learning that had festered there in the last years of Byzantine corruption. It came in specious and engaging guise: the spirit of the Early Renaissance, which was really Christian and beneficent in so many ways, seized upon it with avidity, wolfed it down, good and evil alike, and changed in a day almost, becoming now heathen, profligate, anarchical. Nicholas V and Pius II tried too late to stem the tide and turn it into the channel of compromise; they were followed by an Alexander VI, a Julius II and a Leo X. Savonarola, fighting single-handed against the hell-let-loose in Italy, went to his martyrdom; Cardinal Cusa, S. John Capistran and Erasmus were swept before the torrent unloosed by Luther and Zwingli; Calvin, Beza and the Huguenots, with Marie de Medici and a Catholicism already debauched by Italy, turned France into a shambles, and though a temporal victory remained with the Catholics, it was empty of righteousness and, unchecked, the Renaissance went on its course. At last the cliffs of England that had so long withstood the crescent tide yielded to its assaults, and Henry, Crumwell and Cranmer rose to triumph over Sir Thomas More, Cardinal

Fisher and the martyrs of monasticism. The exile at Avignon had borne its fruits and Catholic civilization had come to an end: what followed was new; whether good or ill is not to be considered here, but it was at all events in no sense Catholic, and whether good or ill the epoch of the Middle Ages was Catholic first, last and always.

The Great Thousand Years was at an end: it began with a monk and it ended with a monk; what Benedict had begun when he promulgated his Rule in 510, Richard Whiting, Benedictine Abbot of Glastonbury, sealed with his blood in 1539. For a thousand years the impulse set free at Monte Cassino had widened in its circuit until it ringed the world of the West. Each succeeding century saw a new manifestation, but whether Cluniac or Cistercian, Augustinian or Norbertine, Dominican or Franciscan, it was all of the household of the law giver of Monte Cassino, and to the monasticism made possible by S. Benedict we owe the saving of civilization, its regeneration and its Mediaeval victory. But even S. Benedict could not have worked his thousand-year miracle had he been dealing with the exhausted stock of the South that

already had done its vast work in Greece and Rome and Byzantium; new blood was necessary, and this was found in the North, in the lands washed by the Baltic Sea. The record of the narrow lands of Hellas is wonderful enough, but that of those we now know as Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Saxony was more marvellous still. From the middle of the fifth to the middle of the fifteenth century the world of the West was theirs: from the Lombards in Italy to the Normans in England, civilization was of the North, northern: Franks, Burgundians, Saxons, Lothringians, all boasted the same fierce blood of the North, and we may say that the Great Thousand Years, as we know it now as a consistent epoch, was the offspring of the marriage between Northern blood and monastic religion.

It is impossible within the limits of a brief essay to go deeply into the great influence that conditioned Mediaevalism and made it what it was, but certain essential features may be noted. Two of these I have already named as primary, Northern blood, monastic incentive. Then came in some order we cannot now determine, a reforming Papacy, independent of secular

control and arbiter of the destinies of peoples and princes; a single, consistent and united religion, free of heretical or schismatic assaults; and a powerful sense of nationality growing all over Europe by leaps and bounds. Ardent and efficient as were the monks, zealous and unflinching and aggressive as were the occupants of the Chair of Peter, their efforts would have availed nothing had they not behind them a Catholic Faith growing richer every day by that progressive revelation of new aspects of truth and love and beauty which is the inalienable heritage of the Catholic Church. At last the majestic scheme of sacramentalism had received its last illumination and stood revealed in all its penetrating perfection, while through the realization of the due honour and functions of our Lady in the Catholic system religion had acquired a poignancy, a personal appeal, an authority over the souls of men it hardly had exerted before. It was the one important fact in life to all men: everything else was contributory; and — ineffectively at times, misguidedly at times, but always earnestly — men were striving night and day to conform themselves to its will as

this was revealed to them by Pope and bishop, monk and priest, even as they strove to express this in visible form through poetry and music, architecture, sculpture and painting. Politically, it was a time of increasing liberty for the subject, of increasing responsibility for the sovereign: tyranny and absolute monarchy and the vicious dogma "the king can do no wrong" are the children of the Renaissance; in the Middle Ages a vicious king was apt to get short shrift if he went beyond a certain point, and he generally tried to avoid this mark with some scrupulousness; the barons and the Holy See were always on the watch and their jealousy was keen, their arms long and muscular. Socially, there was no middle class, whereby conditions were somewhat happier than in more recent times: the lines were sharply drawn between noble and knight on the one hand, and the churl on the other, but between noble and king the line was of the faintest, and while the case of the peasant was almost as deplorable as that of the whole body of labourers in the first half of the nineteenth century, the workman and the craftsman were infinitely better off in every way than they are to-day,

while to each one in the lower strata of society there were two great institutions whereby, if he could prove himself, he might rise to almost any level — monasticism and feudalism. It was a question of merit only: men-at-arms became squires, knights, barons, if they had it in them and could prove their worth, whereas now social advancement depends on the price one is able to pay; the son of a shepherd, a churl from the fields, a scullion, a beggar even, might through the gate of the cloister become monk, abbot, bishop — and still may, thank God, where religion has not become either a dying superstition or a social amenity. It was all a question of ability, of capacity, and, whatever their faults, monasticism and feudalism were the great agencies for enabling any man, whatever his previous status, to achieve whatever position in life his abilities warranted him in demanding. There was nothing of individualism as we know it now, and nothing of socialism as it has come to be at the hands of professional agitators, yet never before or since was personality developed so completely, nor the community of human interests so largely realized. All through

the Middle Ages names scintillate like fireworks, character flashes and corruscates, but it is not until the time of Wycliffe that we begin to get the note of egotism, nor until the Renaissance that it comes full tide. There is a difference between the individualism of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and that of the fifteenth and those that have followed, that is hard to put into words, but is distinct nevertheless and significant of the difference that lies between Mediaevalism and modernism. And with this brilliant development of personality went a spirit of real communism quite different to the bastard thing that now bears the name. Everywhere, after the great cataclysm of the Dark Ages, men tended towards each other, impelled by a spirit of solidarity; knights and serfs betook themselves to the somewhat mitigated protection of the barons; these coagulated into small nationalities that coalesced and formed kingdoms that grew into empires. Cities gathered themselves together and won their privileges as communes; craftsmen, artificers and workmen banded themselves into guilds and fraternities, merchants into great trading corporations; scholars united to

form colleges and universities, and everywhere through the length and breadth of Europe, setting the pace and leading the way, men and women crowded into old cloisters until, by a process of incessant fusion, the world was full of monasteries and convents, newly founded and at almost the same moment becoming the generators of still newer foundations.

You may know a crescent epoch from one that is decadent by this test at least — if its tendency is centripetal, rather than centrifugal; if scattered units are being gathered up into greater wholes instead of the reverse process, then greater fortune lies beyond and the coming years have much to give. If, on the other hand, things once united and consistent are resolving themselves into their component parts; if a Church is disintegrating into sects, a philosophy into personal followings, society into classes and sub-classes, each fashioning for itself its own aggressive propaganda and its scheme of offence and defence; if literature and the arts are ceasing to be a great popular voicing and are becoming the personal idiosyncrasies of over-differentiated egoists; and if, finally, the human personality itself

is breaking up into its component parts so that each man lives, not a dual, but even a multiple life (his religion, business, philosophy, politics, domestic life all separated by inviolable frontiers) then you may know that an epoch is drawing to its close, and if you are wise, you will look all around for signs of the new day, the grey dawn of which must be visible along the hills.

The Great Thousand Years falls in the former category, our own period in the second, and yet the grey of the coming dawn is easily seen. Everywhere men are looking across and beyond the Renaissance field of vision that for four centuries has held all eyes, and they see again, after a long forgetfulness, the great Christian civilization of the Great Thousand Years. Leo X gives place to Gregory VII, Machiavelli to S. Thomas Aquinas, Henry VIII to Louis IX, Boccaccio to Dante, Raphael to Giotto, Palladio to the cathedral builders. The Renaissance-reformation-revolution engendered materialism, Protestantism and individualism. Great in the eyes of men were their works, and the astounding fabric of modernism still lacks by some courses its final capstone. The end is

not yet, nor will be for some decades, perhaps, though already we are approaching more closely the definitive year than almost any of the other epochs that have preceded our own. If there is to be no violent changing of historical processes, this era of ours, however swiftly it may continue to mount on its ascending course, cannot overpass the end of the century: it will fall as fell Mediaevalism, as fell the vague epoch of reactionary barbarism we call the Dark Ages, as fell Rome, and Hellas, and all the misty empires beyond the Christian era. Another great change is at hand, as always before when the five-hundred-year node has been reached, and for man to-day the great interest lies not in the crowning and creaming of the breaking wave, but in the swell that slowly rises behind, big with prophecy for another five hundred years.

Is monasticism to have a part in this? Are S. Benedict, S. Odo, and S. Bernard, S. Philip Neri, and S. Ignatius Loyola to join with their number, after another five-century interval that separates them, yet another great Saint who, whatever the manner of his working, is yet of the spiritual heritage of the first and greatest of these?

There are signs and wonders that lead us to believe that this is to be. Beaten down under an avalanche of persecution and spoliation, weakened by an internal anæmia, the Orders sunk during the last century into comparative desuetude, but there they have not remained. Everywhere the striving within them of regeneration and bringing back to *Ecclesia Anglicana* of the religious life, after four centuries of abeyance, is a thing so significant that it can be despised only by the hopelessly superficial. The manifold evils that canker the civilization of our own time are explicitly those that monasticism is best fitted to cure, and as a matter of fact, has cured again and again in the past. Within this era are no powers of regeneration: atheism, secularism, materialism, intellectual pride and defiance of law are ill tools for building anew the ramparts of the City of God. The impulse must come from without, from God, not from the world; even as it came in such varying degrees and different ways through Benedictines, Cluniacs and Jesuits. When the abandoned insolence of man, mad in his pride of life, has dashed itself to the stars and, falling again, crumbles away in im-

potent deliquescence, then perhaps will come the new prophet, son of S. Benedict (though perhaps in a new habit and with an amended rule), who as in 500 and 1000 and 1500, will release the souls of men from their captivity, and strive again to make all things new in Christ.

We cannot read the mind of God, and in His wisdom it may be ordered otherwise; but to us, seeing as in a glass, darkly, one thing at least seems clear, and that is that the ills of which our world is dying, but from which we believe it may be saved once the end of the century is passed, are precisely those that are the antitheses of the Evangelical Counsels, in deadly rebellion against them, and only to be destroyed by those that come to the battle in the bright armour of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience.

TEN YEARS AFTER

TEN YEARS AFTER

THE Great Thousand Years" was written in the winter of 1907–8, and in December 1910 it was published in "Pax," the magazine of the Benedictine monks of Caldey in South Wales. In giving it now for printing in more permanent form, I am impelled to provide a commentary drawn up in the light of war, and to call it "Ten Years After."

As for the article itself, it is reprinted exactly in its original form, with only a few verbal corrections. When it appeared there was, in the circumstances of time, no shadow of justification either for its assumptions or the deductions that followed therefrom, a fact that was not concealed from the author by numerous and plausible critics. The events of the last three-and-a-half years have in some cases revised original criticism, but thus far the primary inference, the necessity for a new outpouring of the monastic impulse and a return to Mediaeval models for the basis of a new life, is still rejected with general unanimity.

When "The Great Thousand Years" was written, neither I nor anyone else looked forward to the possibility of a world-war as a possible joint crowning and destruction of that "modern civilization" in which we had no confidence and for which we expressed no admiration. Even Fr. Figgis in his "Civilization at the Cross Roads," and Mr. Chesterton in his "What's Wrong with the World" (both published in this same year of 1910), indicate no vision of possible war as the last act of the five-century drama. That the curtain had risen on a dénouement that was bound to be tragical in its universal destruction, after the fashion both of Classical and Elizabethan drama, was clear, but the motive and the progress of events were buried in profound mystery. Four years later we were justified in our anticipations, even though the foreordained event was of a kind that never had suggested itself to us.

For my own part, the forecast of world-downfall was based partly on a conviction that contemporary civilization was of a nature that made it intolerable for a much longer period and was indeed self-destructive, partly on what appeared to be a

sufficient demonstration of the rhythmical or vibratory method of history, and on the fixing of the nodal points that initiated and determined each individual and self-contained era at five hundred year intervals, the next of which would come at about the end of the century.

Assuming then that if this rhythm continued in the future as it had in the past, back over the entire recorded space of history, it became a natural question as to just where we stood at the time the article was written. There is no mechanical exactness in the lines that are followed: the nodes are precise and each terminates an epoch with inexorable fatalism, but the lines of curve vary to any extent. From the Christian Era we have, first, the swift rise and high, jagged table-land of Roman Imperialism, falling precipitately with the opening of the fifth century, and vanishing in oblivion by the year 500; then the low and ignominious level of the Dark Ages, rising in the unimpressive hillock of Carolingian recovery, only to fall at once to the humiliation of the ninth and tenth centuries; then the dizzy upward leap of Mediaevalism, reaching in a century the

loftiest levels of attainment, continuing thereon for nearly three hundred years, then gently declining in a long glissade to the year 1453, with the rising line of the new era crossing it in its pathetic fall.

And what of this line that swept upward so bravely out of the fifteenth century? Had it already reached its apogee, and if so when; or was the cresting still beyond? In the case of the antecedent epochs, time gave us perspective, history a standard of deduction, and we could with confidence (if also with presumption) plot our ascending and descending lines, until they crossed with curious accuracy at our pre-determined "nodes of history." With the last of these vast vibrations of five centuries' duration, the epoch of the Renaissance with its sequent phenomena of Reformation and Revolution, no such aid was offered. Then it seemed safe to say "The end is not yet, nor may be for some decades, perhaps, though already we are approaching more closely the definitive year than almost any of the epochs that have preceded our own"; and yet, within five years, without warning and without preliminary portents, there burst on the world a cataclysm that has

answered every doubt, making clear in its own red flame of universal devastation the line of rise of the ascending wave, its ominous cresting, its inevitable and irreparable fall.

This need not necessarily have been; a war, even a world-war, does not imply, of its own nature, a revolution such as this. Wars have ended eras as they have ushered them in, as they have accompanied each phase of their development, and when the first Prussian skirmish line passed the frontiers of Belgium there was nothing in that act of war, nothing in the possibilities it laid bare, little even in the gross and repellant fact of broken oaths that alone made it possible, that gave a guaranty of the actual sequence of events which proved even exaggeratedly dramatic in its perfect exposition of the qualities that marked an epoch, as they made inevitable its unhonoured end.

Dramatic in its vivid consistency, almost miraculous in its consummate exposition of things both hidden and denied, the war, as it has been waged by the Teuton-Moslem allies, is the great revealer, the great expositor of "modern civilization." Neither

Homer nor Æschylus, Dante nor Shakespeare, could have devised an epic or contrived a drama of such consistency and power. No slip in character, no lapse in consistency, no dramatic opportunity let pass, the mighty creation has been forged with consummate efficiency, and from Liège and Kinsale to the Isonzo and Brest-Litovsk, there is no weakening, no false step, but rather a coherent and masterly building-up, until the great fabric stands perfected and supreme, — stands ready for its fall.

There is something almost Greek in this perfection of artistry: one thinks instinctively of Œdipus, Antigone, Hypolitus, the note of fate, of implacable destiny, is so clear, its workings so direct and cumulative. And then comes the shock of contrast between the terrible morality of the Hellenic masterpieces, and the cold profligacy of their contemporary rival, and again we are conscious of the irreparable crevasse that gapes between the close of Attic culture, the collapse of modern civilization.

Each era brings some new things to birth, each ends after its own fashion. The contributions of the last five centuries are other than those of Greek or Roman or

Byzantine or Mediaeval epochs, and the ending of their day is just as strange and new. Five years ago we could not forecast the nature of this termination, to-day it is clear in every detail, and the great accomplishment is the achievement of one people: the same that, five centuries ago, took over into their own hands, and conditioned for that period, the new forces of the Renaissance that had been generated on the shores of the Mediterranean, and by another race under a different impulse, making them into something new and alien, and offering them to those others of their own kin along the northern and western seas, to be their guide and inspiration until the unescapable end.

Our own era of five centuries, all, that is, that has followed the lamentable ending of Mediaevalism with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, is the child of the Renaissance, but this is not the Renaissance of Petrarch, of Pico della Mirandola, of Leonardo da Vinci, of Pope Pius II; it is that of the Medici, the Sforza, the Borgia; of Valla and Macchiavelli; as this was assimilated, transformed, made palatable to the mind of the North by Beza, Zwingli,

Calvin, Crumwell, and Luther protagonist of all. Granting to him, in whom our era had its beginning, full credit for an original moral sense that revolted from the spiritual and physical profligacy of the unholy union between a decadent Mediaevalism and a rampant neo-paganism, it still is true that in him is found to admiration the perfection of the three things that have made the last five centuries what they were, and backed by a dynamic force that established them in an almost universal dominion: worship of intellect, worship of force, worship of the ego.

From the first came that cold, logical and bloodless mentality that made all things in heaven and on earth amenable to the intellectual process; that destroyed mystery, denied the higher assent of spiritual perception and, in the end, abolished sacramentalism, Catholic philosophy, authority, religion itself, and made possible, indeed inevitable, the philosophy of Haeckel, Huxley and Nietsche, the "religion" of Harnack, Strauss and Rénan, and the materialistic-empirical system that during the nineteenth century gained complete control of politics, education, industry, economics and society.

From the second came the inevitable declension towards, and finally upon, the recognition of absolute force as the *ultima ratio* of all things; the decay of the moral sense in personal, corporate and public relations, the abolition of conscience, the abandonment of the ancient instinct towards honour and chivalry, the return, in the impulse towards this last war, and in its conduct (so far at least as Germany is concerned), to the sheer brutality of that immoral reliance on force and force alone, regardless of the laws of God and man, so fully set forth by its great expositor, von Bernhardi.

From the third came the final destruction of the old communal sense of the Middle Ages, that splendid and specifically Christian impulse that had brought into being the early and beneficent feudalism, monasticism, the first Crusades, the universities, the trade and craft guilds, the city-states, the English parish, chivalry, parliaments, the very states of Europe. The crowning glory of Mediaevalism — individuality through communal unity — had, by the lapsing of the original incentive, degenerated into individualism through disintegration, and,

with physical force accepted as the effective argument, and a plausible and mordant intellectualism to give plenary justification, become the universal law.

Last phase of all comes the great synthesis; the unity of religion destroyed, the unity of philosophy destroyed, the unity of society destroyed, the disintegrating forces — relationalism, materialism, individualism — conscious that disruption can no further go except to the next and last step into annihilation, unite in the creation of a new thing that shall take the place of the abandoned honour, conscience and God, and, if it may be, form a novel and potent force towards the building of a new era greater than the last, or than any that had been before. So came the idea of the State; that mysterious fiction, that energizing force, that efficient and mechanical entity that has reached its apogee in Germany and, as I write, is justifying its claim to be the one effective power in the world.

It is not the corporate entity of the Middle Ages, that effective fact that was the result of the working union of individuals, it is beyond and above the individual, it exists only by his utter self-

abnegation, it rises on the ruins of his abandoned personality, and he dies that It may live. It is not a substitute for or even a development of the old and commanding religious motive, it is its antithesis, and after two millenniums the words of the Bishop of Reims to King Clovis are now reversed, and it cries relentlessly to the heritors of the Middle Ages as well as of the Renaissance, "Destroy what thou hast worshipped; worship what thou hast destroyed." All the content of Mediaevalism goes; its faith in the undemonstrable, its devotion to a definite ethic it loved yet failed wholly to achieve, its passionate following after spiritual ideals, its faithfulness to an abstract honour it could not justify by scientific or logical methods, its upholding of the pledged word, — all go into the pyre of great burning, and in their place is accepted for fanatical following a new and awful thing, Material Advantage, won by unhampered force and justified by a cynical philosophy that bases itself on a denial of all spiritual verities and establishes its infallibility by process of scientific deduction and mechanical logic.

And the thing itself, together with the

forces that establish its foundations, and those defined principles whereby it demonstrates its own justification, take on the aspect of a great reform, a new advance in the evolutionary development of humanity. This is its greatest strength, for while in itself it is reactionary beyond the wildest imaginings, it explicitly rejects all reaction and assembles for its backing every element of mental activity that claims to be progressive. It is nothing if not scientific, intellectual, humanitarian and efficient. Rationalism and the scientific method, victorious over dogma, superstition and authority, are its foundation stones. Social service is proclaimed as its objective and also as its method. Material welfare, as the only definite good that has survived the breakdown of the old régime inherited from Mediaevalism, is the sole certainty in life, and force, fortified by the appalling achievements of scientific thought and industry during the last century, the one practical mode of operation. Socialism is not antagonized but purchased, so pathetically becoming "State-Socialism" and ceasing to exist either as an ethical or an economic force; education becomes practi-

cal not cultural, and the advanced ideas of the new school of professional pedagogy are made completely contributory to its own ends: liberal theology, the "higher criticism," modernism and "new thought" are all harnessed to the chariot wheels of the new Juggernaut, while "scientific efficiency," or as it is sometimes called, "Kultur," becomes the great and perfectly effective energizing power.

It was an idea magnificent in its conception, magnificent in its working-out; the important point, however, is that it is undeniably the awful thing predicted from of old, and that is, Antichrist.

I suppose it was just this masterly taking over of all the forms and symbols and methods of the most reforming and efficient modernism, that blinded all our eyes to the nature of the cataclysm that was upon us. That a great and ruthless change was at hand, as a result of which the whole era of the last five centuries would go down in irretrievable ruin, was believed by many people and asserted by a lesser number, but I do not find any recorded prophecy that this would be engineered by the very perfect fruition of modern civilization as

it showed itself in its perfection in Prussia. To most of us the threat came in the shape of some kind of a revolt against the very efficiency of this triumphant civilization, probably economic; and to some form of internecine and disintegrating warfare precipitated by Socialism or anarchism, most of us looked for the inevitable catastrophe. Instead we can see now that the revolt of Socialism,* like all the other conspicuous phenomena of reform, was simply a by-product of civilization itself, identical in its nature and its interests, and in the end a powerful agent towards that final perfec-

* This does not refer to "The International," that radical and anarchist outgrowth of a respectable Socialism that has never been deceived by the Bismarkian craft that has betrayed the "conservative" type of Socialism into accepting and endorsing the programme of imperialistic politico-financial operators, which at the outbreak of the war was leading directly to industrial slavery or the "Servile State" of Mr. Belloc. "Internationalism" is working consistently for the Social Revolution which is to destroy and reverse the great system built up during the last five centuries. It has apparently established itself in Russia and is moving steadily towards accomplishing its programme of property confiscation and a proletarian governmental oligarchy. It is working hiddenly in Italy, France, England and the United States, under one name or another, though through varying channels, but always with the same end in view. The war opens unlimited new opportunities, and through it, or after it, Internationalism will for a time prevail, so becoming the final episode in the destruction and extinction of Modernism.

tion that, achieved, was to become its own executioner.

For the truth is that what we call "Modern Civilization" has simply collapsed through its own impossible unwieldiness; it is like a toy balloon that explodes when the air-pressure has become too great. Unlike the balloon, however, the catastrophe is not instantaneous but progressive: the process may continue for many years, even for two generations, but it must be evident now, even to the most optimistic, that the process has begun. World-war, the Social Revolution, — and what then? Far vision is not given us, we only are assured that whatever the method, however numerous and varied its phases, the end will have been reached by the close of the century. How long it will take for the building of the new era depends, as does the nature of the era itself, on what we learn from the war and how well we learn it. If that "transvaluation of values" of which we hear so much, is effected; if out of the war we achieve our own redemption, as we freely may, then the nature of the next epoch is assured, and its accomplishment is dependent on the rapidity and the una-

nimity with which we establish our new ratio of comparative values, and transform our methods and our machines to make their realization possible.

There is of course the alternative. If we have a German victory and a German peace, or a peace by negotiation and an approximate return (on the principle of "no annexations and no indemnities") to the *status quo,* which means the same thing, or if we have an Allied victory with a conclusive peace, but with a return to all our old standards, then, whatever is gained, the war has been lost, and all will remain to do over again after the Social Revolution has had its way. From the first invasion of Italy by Alaric and his Visigoths A.D. 400, to the coming of Theodoric and the Ostrogoths A.D. 493, is practically a century, and it took this space of time fully to break down imperialism. Rome learned nothing from the Visigoth calamity, little from the coming of Atilla and the Huns, or even from Odoacer and his Teuton horde. Rome never could learn, she was destroyed, that is all; and the last invader, Theodoric, became a king of desolation and began the process of rebuilding on universal ruin.

There is no assurance that we shall learn where Rome refused, and it may be that for a century we also shall deny the writing on the wall, until the present war is followed by revolution, and that by yet other visitations the nature of which we cannot predict, until our own sequence of Goths, Huns, Teutons and Lombards has taught the lesson, through terror heaped on terror even to ruin and extinction, that at the first warning we refused to accept.

Whether we profit or not by first adversity, we shall profit in the end, and not far from the year 2000, at the latest, the new era will begin. It was towards this that I was looking when "The Great Thousand Years" was written, and with particular regard to the creative powers of the monastic idea and the monastic institution. At that time, except for the few who were interested in the history of monasticism, knew its relation to the development of human society, and were conscious of the new life stirring through the old and moribund orders and showing itself with power even where before it had not been for centuries, there was no excuse for the hope or justification for the publicity. There may

be more now (I do not know) who, after three and a half years of war and its progressive revelations, may be induced to a more tolerant view. At all events these years have not been without result, and already men are turning instinctively towards the religious life in such numbers as have not been known for generations. Let me add a few more words on the theory itself, explaining more carefully, but briefly, just why it is reasonable to suppose that the monastic movements of the fifth, the tenth and the fifteenth centuries should be followed by another in the twentieth century, for the same purpose and with the same result.

I have said above "the manifold evils that canker the civilization of our own time are explicitly those that monasticism is best fitted to cure, and as a matter of fact has cured again and again in the past; . . . the ills of which our world is dying, but from which we believe it may be saved once the end of the century is passed, are precisely those that are the antithesis of the Evangelical Councils, in deadly rebellion against them, and only to be destroyed by those that come to the battle in the bright

armour of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience." Does the war make this statement any easier to believe?

Poverty. This is the antithesis of wealth, the dominant and controlling power in the world before the war. It was the prime object of human endeavour, the end and aim of industrial civilization. During the first decade of the twentieth century it had fully established its standards in society, politics and industry: it had obtained definite influence in religion, education, art and philosophy. The position of wealth, in theory and practice, was so universally acknowledged that no argument is needed to establish the fact. Imperial finance lay at the root of the greater part of all State action, the parliamentary system and democracy being used simply as its successful camouflage. Both directly and indirectly it precipitated the war.

Monasticism proclaims poverty as its first necessity. The word has two meanings. First, that poverty which detests wealth as such and as an end in itself, recognizing it as the " Philosopher's stone " (with reverse action) that transmutes the fine gold of true values into the base metal of false and evil

standards. Second, that poverty which aims to destroy covetousness by taking from the individual all possibility of private material possession, and vesting it in a group or community. To the poisonous influence of concrete, hoardable wealth, in itself, the world had added the gross selfishness that tends to grow out of individual possession, and the result was an aggravated individualism that destroyed the virtue and the potency of wholesome society, substituting the sinister combinations of predatory interests working against the individual outside the ring, and sacrificing honour, chivalry, and brotherhood, which are the basis of the social organism. To oppose and destroy wealth, so estimated and so employed, the spirit of monasticism can as ever render service not predicable of any other force.

Chastity. Here also we have two meanings. First, the rejection of the lusts of the flesh, for decencies' sake. Second, voluntary renunciation of legitimate joys and blessings for the sake of service. In the first case the condition of the world was probably no worse than it has been at all times when wealth, idleness, fat peace and religious in-

difference have marked the end of an era. This is about all one can say, for it certainly was incomparably lower than, for example, in the early Middle Ages. The inherent possibilities of the social system in the first decade of the century are now revealed, and it is evident that unless the virtue of chastity is preached again as by the Benedictines, Cluniacs, Cistercians and Franciscans of the past, society is not only at an end, but well deserves its termination. It is however in its other meaning that the second great monastic principle needs emphasis as never before. The whole scheme of contemporary life rejects and denies renunciation or self-denial in any form, except that which is supposed to result in increased monetary income or capital. The favourite philosophies of the last quarter-century extolled and justified what was called "self-realization," from a rancid hedonism to the gross selfishness of a psychological egoism that honoured the man or the woman who wrecked a family to discover a "soul mate" or "affinity." Self-indulgence, even when the moral law was not violated, was the guiding force in life, whether it resulted in laziness on the one hand or feverish "effi-

ciency" on the other, and until the war came to rouse the sense of sacrifice and renunciation in the defence of righteousness and justice and honour, latent in every son of man, this holiest motive of all those operative in life was rejected, despised and forgotten. The war will do much towards restoring it to honour, but when the fighting is done, the spirit of monasticism alone can continue to uphold the high valour of renunciation.

Obedience. Here again we find two interpretations. There is, first, obedience for its disciplinary value to the individual, second, as a means for the accomplishing of great ends. Industrialism took honour from holy poverty, evolutionary philosophy destroyed chastity in the sense of high renunciation: democracy has annihilated the idea of obedience in any sense. The breakdown of that honourable dependence which always existed when there was a clear and just status for the several categories of life, was disasterous, for status was correlative and bred sense of duty on both sides. It bred obedience also, for from serf or peasant up to the sovereign there was an ever-ascending scale of obedience and responsibility, and

during the Middle Ages at least, the sovereign, whether king or emperor, owed obedience to the contract that bound him to his people. Violated, the contract became void, and the king himself could be deposed, and very frequently was. Still worse than the destruction of status was the working of the democratic *method*. In effect it has meant contempt for law, for contracts and for honourable obligations; it has meant the rejection of competent leadership, and the insolent claim, so easily enforced, of equality of ability where was only gross inequality; it has meant the degeneration of democratic government to that point of incapacity which marked the "free" communities, before the war, just as industrialism, intellectualism, and the full application of evolutionary dogmas meant the exaltation of force as the *ultima ratio* amongst the communities reputed to be "un-free."

Obedience is quite as honourable as command; without it liberty is not a benefit but a menace. Unless it exists as a recognized part of the social system, as a thing required of all men under varying conditions and towards varying authority, no corporate

work of any kind can be accomplished and society will merge in anarchy. During the last generation it has practically disappeared; from individual and social consciousness, from the family, the school, the industrial system, the social organism. The end of the insane progress is to be seen in those labour groups that violate their pledges and disregard the claims of honour and patriotism, even in the midst of war, for the sake of pecuniary gain, or to enforce private contentions through taking a base advantage of the critical necessities of the community. It is also seen in Russia, where each man suddenly became a law unto himself, and the soldiers entrenched before the enemy debated whether to carry out the commands of their officers to attack, or to ignore them and retreat — the decision being in favour of the latter course a sufficient number of times to destroy Russia, to imperil her allies and even the cause itself, and to make very real the possibility of complete, ultimate disaster.

Here again the war may do something towards restoring to life the high virtue of obedience, though it has signally failed in Russia and gives threat of failure elsewhere.

In any case it can achieve only a measure of success, and it is to the monastic ideal, revived and made widely operative, that we must look for the energy that will restore the lost virtue of obedience to the place of honour it must hold in each individual, and in each community of individuals, whether this is secular in its motive and its aims, or spiritual.

Beyond the corrective value of the Evangelical Precepts, there is yet another quality of the monastic ideal and method, which is in absolute opposition to modernism and may perhaps prove the solution of the great problem of how the world is to be re-made, along what lines, once the cataclysm of destruction is accomplished. It is based on the idea of *communal life conceived in the human scale.* For five hundred years there has been unbroken, cumulative progress towards the imperial scale in all things, and the perfection of this system was achieved during the first decade of the twentieth century. Imperial States, Imperial Finance, Imperial Industry rose triumphant over society, and the greatest of these was Imperial Finance. One thing only remained to be achieved; World-Imperial-

ism. Germany, in the last days of July, 1914, launched her great offensive for the achieving of this Apotheosis of Imperialism, and the question is still in debate as to whether she will succeed.

Imperialism in government, in industry and in finance must all be destroyed before the world can go on again, and the alternative is that which also lay at the root of the greatness and the righteousness of the Middle Ages — the human scale in human associations. In a sane and wholesome society the unit — domestic, industrial, economic, educational, religious, political — is the group where all men are presumably known to each other, or where at least their interests are so nearly identical that unity of impulse and of action are not only possible but inevitable. The bloated empires enclosing and stifling countless nationalities; the vast financial aggregates reaching out into every industrial centre and money-capitol of the world; the bloodless and inhuman industrial and commercial trusts and combinations on the one hand, the subterranean ramifications of a sinister "Internationalism" in unionized labour on the other, must pass into dark oblivion with the era

that created them, and in some way return must be made to the living units of human scale that made the guilds and communes, the parishes and city-states, the orders of chivalry, the universities and the monasteries of the Middle Ages, living signs of the nearest approach man has yet made, through his many inventions, to a sound, wholesome and righteous organization of society.

This is to be the next move in the line of social regeneration, and the perfect model now, as in the past, is the house of a community of men and women consecrated to the Religious Life. The model, note, not the mode. Monasticism is a non-natural estate, accepted by a few, through voluntary renunciation, in order to accomplish certain work that must be done and can be done only after this fashion. For the vast majority of men and women life "in the world" is the life to which they are called. For them the system of monasticism becomes an example, and it is this very quality of communal life conceived in human scale which is most susceptible of extension from the cloister out into the manifold fields of secular activity. It is to the monasteries,

Benedictine, Cluniac, Cistercian, that we owe the fine organization of society during the Middle Ages, and it is to these Orders, together with the others that have come into being during the last five hundred years, that we shall turn again to find how once more we can build up a life that shall be human and not Imperial.

And now I must speak of one assertion in the original article which may seem to run counter to this later commentary. I mean the statement to the effect that in every crescent epoch the controlling force is centripetal, in a decadent age centrifugal. This is true of the past, and it may be true of the future without contradicting what I have said about the necessity of destroying Imperialism and the substitution of many units of human scale. The present century is a time of decadence and dissolution, when all that had laboriously gathered together is being dissipated along with the hoarded wealth of generations. In the end, either as the result of war or of the imminent and inevitable Social Revolution, Imperial Modernism will break up into its component parts, and we may very well see again a chaos such as that which followed

the ending of the Roman Empire. Out of this will come in time the instinctive gathering together of men into small units for defence and for communal development, and the sign of the beginning of the new era will be the assimilating of these into a larger unity *without the surrender of independence and autonomy*. It would be as impossible for these manifold communities to continue indefinitely without cohesion in some form as it was for the feudal units of France or the petty states of Germany to exist in mutually inimical isolation. There will be, and must be, an ultimate synthesis, but the essential unit must first be determined and its personality established; after may come the progressive unity that marks in all things the crescent epoch.

The process followed during the latter Middle Ages was natural enough, but with the Renaissance it began to accomplish itself at the expense of essential liberty, and during the nineteenth century it became an insanity and a curse. If, in a wisdom born of the drastic purgation of war, we return to the model established during the Great Thousand Years, and build a new world in accordance with that model on the desolate

ruins of the old, it is for us to see that the lesson is well learned from failure, and that when the synthetic process begins we do not sacrifice the new liberty we have won for the old Imperialism we now are casting away.

May the sons of St. Benedict, whatever their name and Order, aid us and guide us in the great work of rebuilding a world, as they have ever done from the day when Benedict of Nursia went out from a crumbling Rome to the hidden cave in the Sabine hills to receive the Divine revelation of a new life for a world sick unto death.

And may St. Benedict and St. Odo, St. Bernard and St. Norbert, St. Bruno, St. Francis and St. Domenic, St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Vincent de Paul, pray for us and for those that come after, that the work may be well done.

Laus Deo

W9-BWJ-608